

A REMINISCENCE

THE PRAIRIES OF IOWA

CHRISTMAS, 1901

WM. J. HADDOCK



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A
REMINISCENCE

THE PRAIRIES OF IOWA
AND OTHER NOTES

BY WM. J. HADDOCK
IOWA CITY, IOWA

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WHAT YOU WILL FIND.

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“The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
An' none but he !” —*Burns*

ROBERT HADDOCK,
HOLLY SPRINGS, IOWA.

Dear Brother:

I have been recalling my experiences of the early days when you and I were young and rustled for a foothold in the land. And yet we took many a “shine” out of the world as we went along. I got full of the old recollections and had to write them down. Why not? Burns has the proper idea of the past and the friends of yore. I quote from the old song,

“Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne?”

It is over a century since that was written, but genius can never grow old. We think as kindly of an “auld acquaintance” today as they did in his time or at any time.

After you got back from Vicksburg and other southern places, where you spent so much time practicing with a musket (teaching the southern "Johnnies" manners and a proper appreciation of the American flag) you had more experience of the prairie than I ever had. On your return from the south you appropriated enough Woodbury county bottom land prairie to make you rich in time. Probably with your "go" you would have become rich anywhere. The prairie there helped you to locate your strapping big boys around you on that teeming land. They will be rich, too, in far less time than it took you to make it. Last fall I wanted to go out to see you and those four fine nephews of mine, and the nieces too, before there are so many of the new generation that I shall get lost in counting them; but at that time I could not get off from the office.

The next best thing to seeing "an auld acquaintance" is to write to him and hence I have written the accompanying reminiscences to you. As it is, you must take the paper instead of a visit. When I can go out to your prairie to see you I will do so—in the sunny fall, where the Indian Summer used to come in. I will make a long easy visit, and loaf around in your hammocks under the shade trees planted by yourself on that wonderful prairie. You will tell of your army adventures and show your clumsy, old musket; and get your pipe and smoke and call up the blissful past. Your daughters and daughters-in-law will gather in from their homes for miles around,

with their youngsters making a jolly young crowd. Some of them will go to practicing on your girls' piano; but most of them will think that they can make more noise outside and try to enjoy life that way. We will listen to the racket, wander over the past, doze in the hammocks and dream that we are young again.

Yours truly,

WM. J. HADDOCK.

Crag—Iowa City,
Christmas, 1901.

WHERE THE WHEELS GO 'ROUND.

We all like to recite our experiences and recall our past adventures. In the recounting of such incidents we feel something akin to the original impressions. Such recitals have the ring of history, or biography, at the least, in them. An ambition of this kind is laudable enough and matters may be thus preserved that would otherwise pass unnoticed. Most matters of the kind have no general interest and yet may be pleasant to those who are cognizant of similar experiences in their own history.

My first general views of trade and my early business notions were gained in Philadelphia during my stay there from January, 1850, to the spring of 1856—over six years. I do not mean that I was ever the least conspicuous in any business, but our governing ideas of these things must be obtained somewhere, and mine were gathered in Philadelphia, to some extent, at least, at the time named. Philadelphia is a model city, and probably the best in the United States, so far as a healthy, cleanly, great manufacturing centre is concerned. It leads in cotton and woolen fabrics and excels in most kinds of products used in our domestic economy.

All large cities run to specialties and generally control in their own departments. New York was a distributing centre and the best in the world. Chicago was then a shopping place for parts of the west, with the worst of streets and the most dismal of boarding houses. Pittsburg had its own iron and steel trade at that time and has no more yet, except its strikes, and it leads in these lines easily.

Philadelphia had attractions beside its leading industries. It had no "flats," at least not in my time. Its domestic architecture furnished small, commodious tenements for each single family, large or small, in the city. For the wealthier citizens the larger or statelier buildings were at their command. All, however, rich or poor, had white marble steps at their front doors. This was their pride and the distinguishing fad of the town. A family might be poor, but it must have a good polish on its white marble door steps. If a family were rich it could do no more than have well scrubbed steps. These marble steps seemed to be the great leveller and democratic feature of the city. In fine weather in the evening all the inhabitants, rich and poor, sat out, each on his own door-steps and enjoyed it. They were like the patriarchs of old, sitting under their own vines and fig trees and were just as secure. I suppose the custom still exists, for long afterwards, in 1875, my wife and I visited Philadelphia, and in passing through the residence districts she wondered at the Friday afternoon odor of soap-suds found there. I explained the

fad and pointed out that the steps must be scrubbed no matter how it smelled.

In looking back over this period I find that our time was not all given over to work, nor to sitting on the door steps. We had our recreations as well. "Our set," of which I was the youngest, on Saturday afternoons would go across the Delaware river in a rowboat hired for the occasion, and go swimming in the Delaware on the Jersey shore. We always got our boat at a wharf near the site of Penn's old Shackamaxon street treaty elm. The tree was gone and the place marked by a stone with letters on it. To that extent the tree came off better than either Quaker Penn or his dickering Indians, for they are gone too, and no stone at all marks the place where they either lived or died.

On other evenings of the week, when opportunity offered, we attended public lectures. The greatest lecturers in the country always turned up at Philadelphia. The tickets cost a quarter and the lecture was considered by us as educational and well worth the money. I thought then as I do now that education was worth all that it cost. By the way, the public schools of Philadelphia, in my time, were opened as free public night schools and did good. I attended and was glad of the opportunity. The theatres were a rare treat, about once a week, in the winter time, at a cost of twenty-five cents only, for the pit, or parquet as it was called. I considered this as another good educational factor and worth the money. The travel to and from

these entertainments cost us something too. There were no street cars at that time: their day had not yet come. Public travel was entirely by omnibuses. We had to ride as we could not spend time to walk. Visiting the various sights around the city was done in the "busses" and at some expense at that. When any new excitement broke out "down town," like a trial in the old State House over the extradition of kidnaped slaves, the appearance of a noted political orator, or the like, were other calls on our resources which must be met. I had good wages, always above the average, but in some way my capital was not increasing very fast, and little was left as the time went by. We had some exhibitions that cost us nothing. The volunteer fire companies were always at feud with each other and their fights were a free public show, but their regularity as an amusement could not be relied upon, and yet they were quite frequent too. Oh, it is a gay thing for a young fellow, still under twenty-one years of age, to live in a great city!

Why did I "pull out" and leave this elysium for youth, marble door-steps and all? I think all our actions are controlled by inevitable laws which may not be apparent, but which govern our movements, nevertheless. A large fraction of that city were operatives in some branch of production or another. They could only expect to get at any time such portion of the price of the products as could be set off for the "hands." They could never rise above that, and under the laws of competition that amount

was not large and never could be. Operatives of all grades, in and about a manufacturing business, must be limited to this fraction of the price of the goods. Philadelphia had and could have only two classes, in the main, the employers and the wage-earners. The wage-earners must inevitably remain such always. The employers might sink, but the employed had small chance of rising. This cut off all hope of any change for the better. At whatever age he was, the operative, if he had the brains to see it, was a toiler in that line to the end. He might see blazoned over the factory gate, as Dante did over the gate of hell, "No hope for him who enters here."

Whatever fixes the price and conditions of wages in the staple products in a manufacturing city will settle the price of labor or wages in all other industries of that place. All these things sympathize with each other and rise or fall together. This is why I concluded to "pull out" and abandon that city. "It wouldn't pay."

Young men flourish on hope and are nothing without it, but most of them, born and reared in cities, in settling into their life work do not see the inevitable laws that stand in the way of their advancement. It is but fair to state that their stupidity and their ignorance of the world makes them contented with their lot and careless and happy. They have been in that kind of work all their lives, and in many cases their fathers before them followed the same pursuit. Once they get fairly started in this path, their motto seems to be, as the church ritual has it, "to

walk in the same, all the days of their lives." This cuts off all chance of their rising above the common level of their class and leaves their condition unenviable. That I was right in my financial views the results in all these years fully demonstrate. The "hands" have grown older but are no richer in all this time. They took matters so tranquilly they have not even had the heart to get up a decent "strike" as a protest against fate.

Being in this mood, my uncle McBride, a young man with a young wife, came along from New York City on his way to the west. They were not long married and were full of life and ambition, and had faith in the new country. I borrowed \$15.00, as my cash was nearly gone, and went with them to start life anew in the great west, with hope for the future almost as high as their own.

OFF FOR THE WEST.

With a laudable effort at economy we bought tickets for the trip as far west as Rock Island, Illinois, on the "Emigrant Cars" for \$12.50 each. We felt that we had done our duty and were happy. At the last minute we got aboard that car, (there was only one) and were off. We had trouble in finding seats but managed to squeeze into places near the door. It was just as well as the ventilation was better there.

At that time we regarded the emigrant as the "bone and sinew" of the country and sometimes the

brains too, and considered that he was entitled, under all circumstances, to the greatest consideration. This may have been right, but we rather thought before our trip was over that our views sounded too much like, "Lo, the poor Indian" or the "Man and brother" theory.

The emigrants were packed in that car pretty closely. They had some peculiarities about them that no car could disguise. Their dress had a foreign air and seemed to be of heavy quilted, dark colored stuff and greasy withal. They had their beds with them, too, packed tight all around them in the car. They ate and slept in the same place. They had their food in bags like knapsacks. They had other bundles and boxes of all sorts with them, too. They spoke, as it seemed to me, some unknown tongue, at least they tried no English. The car had a fearful smell, but it had been in the emigrant service for a long time and may somehow have acquired the odor in that trade. At any rate it "smelled to heaven."

The car was called a "caboose" in railroad parlance and was always hitched to a freight train. The railroad company let it take the world easy. They could not afford to rush for \$12.50 each. What did we care? Were we not enjoying a new role—economy? It was impossible to sleep there and equally out of the question to board ourselves in such quarters. That "heavenly smell" was too much for us. There was nothing for it but to stop off every night and lodge and eat as best we could. This mode of travel took time, but it was all we could do. We

did that in deference to those foreign gentlemen, some of whom may have been noblemen in disguise, just come over to marry wealthy American girls. I had no heiress in view myself and was not jealous. If it had been otherwise it would have made little difference, as the American girl would let nothing balk her where a title is involved. She regards a title as she does a gorgeous bonnet—something wherewith to pique the other girls. Still, that is all that there really is of a title anywhere.

We had our trunks checked "through" and found our night "lay over" plan to work well enough. It might in a fast community be considered slow. The whole trip took us six days and six nights. That was less than \$2.10 per day for railroad fare. Riding in such company at that rate was a picnic. A financier might have said, "time is money." If it is, that was the only surplus that we had, but we had wealth enough that way. After a "lay over" when we took our car in the morning we could never tell whether it was the same lot or a new car of disguised noblemen who were before us. They all looked alike and the car smelled the same. I think that the train did not travel at night but "tied up" at sundown. There was no occasion to hurry and it is very doubtful if they ever did so, under any circumstances. But, anyway we were determined not to be beaten out of our \$12.50 tickets. We would ride it out, let it take what time it might. We spent two nights and one day at Pittsburg, but that was not our fault. There was some difficulty with the train. It

would not travel on Sunday, or the like, and so stopped over for a day. We enjoyed the rest very much. We struck most of the restaurant places between Pittsburg and Chicago. They seemed to understand their trade and made the most of it. One fellow had out a sign which ran, "Meals 25 cents when the cars arrive." A Scotch boy who had attached himself to our party offered to bet his Scotch cap that meals were not over 15 cents when the cars "was'nt in." I was of his opinion and thought that figure would be quite enough, too.

At Chicago the emigrant car was switched off, as the emigrants seemed to like the place. That town as a whole was on the plan of the "Emigrant Car." The streets and lots were in the process of being raised to a new and higher grade. Some parts of a street were eight or ten feet higher than other parts of it. The houses, too, were miscellaneously elevated in the same way. It was spring and the whole city was very wet, and the streets were soaked and slimy everywhere. The "Emigrant Car" had met its match. When we walked along the sidewalks the boards squelched in the mud and water, in the low places. The emigrants seemed to consider it their natural habitat. Chicago had attractions for them and they enjoyed it. In our further progress we were given better cars and we fared on our way gaily without the noblemen.

GOLDEN DAYS.

To wander back and recall the early days and conditions in Iowa, forty-five years ago, offers a novel contrast with the present times. It is common for us to discuss our status glibly and to compare our present with the past and and to congratulate ourselves on our progress and prosperity. There is no denying our prosperity, and it would never do, if we could, with our present lights to drop back half a century or so. But when I think of that early period that can never return, I cannot but think that those early happy times were the golden days of Iowa.

The citizens of Iowa were happy and contented with their condition. They assisted in all public enterprises and rejoiced in them. When the first railroad came into Iowa City on January 1, 1856, the town, and all the settlements round about, were wild with joy; they held a public ball in the State House there, and all were merry and happy that livelong New Year's night. The old settlers knew how to enjoy themselves and at the same time to turn a public building to some account.

New Year's day, nor any of the great holidays of the country are especially great to me. These are common to the whole community. I have my own red-letter days which to me are the brightest in the year. I have long looked upon the tenth of April, 1856, as the most memorable day of my early recollections. On that day I crossed the Mississippi at Davenport and first set foot

in this beautiful and bountiful State of Iowa. From that time forth I was an Iowan.

The new railroad had given prestige to Iowa City. Its fame had extended eastward and it was now our destination. The day was fine and we jogged along that railroad rather slowly and cautiously. About West Liberty we discovered the cause. A novel state of things it was, too. The engine wheels and car wheels were covered with mud after the manner of wagon wheels on a muddy road. What did this mean? Simply that the ties and rails had been laid very precipitately on the level, frozen ground and when the thaw came, rails and all, sank deep in the mud. The railroad saved its bonus that was coming if it ran into Iowa City by January 1, 1856. But there was no bonus depending on getting us through, and as the mud grew deeper I began to think that our train never would make it. But at last we were tumbled out into more mud in the dusk, at Iowa City. That was the last train over that road till the mud dried up and the rails had been raised to the surface again.

We made our way to the "American House." We thought there would be some compensation after the day's experience, in a hostelry with that sounding title. The name sounded well but it was misleading. That house was a disappointment to us. When we refer hereafter to the hearty, whole-souled, brotherly old settlers of Iowa we beg to exclude all the hash vending landlords in the state, whatever they call their houses. Dealing in cooked food seems to be debasing.

The "American House" was too much for us, and we found a comfortable boarding place next day, down the river on the east side, a few miles south of Iowa City. This was a temporary refuge till the mud dried and the ground was solid again. I hated to "lie by" for mud. But what could I do? The streets of Iowa City as well as the country roads were just now practically impassable. If the railroad had to "tie up" until the mud stiffened, why not I? My present quarters were with a well-to-do settler at a very handsome place just in the edge of the young timber and near a nice bend in the river. A short way from the house we had fine views of the river and in the evenings it was nearly covered with wild ducks. The wild geese were abundant, too, and flew over the tree tops in flocks about sunset, but did not seem to roost near this point. Other kinds of game were plentiful too, fish were abundant and could easily be caught. We tried hunting and fishing, with but moderate success. The landlord's daughters did the cooking of whatever game we brought in, and considered it merely as a matter of course. They were used to it, and a brace of wild pigeons or a couple of wild geese would have been all the same to them.

I captured an immense turtle and was under the impression that I had a marvelous terrapin. I wondered what the Philadelphia boys would say if they saw that. When I got to the house I learned that it was only a snapping turtle. I next found the settler's girls and asked them to cook it. This they declined, ridiculing that

turtle. I had got it into a big flat box in the yard and it lay there sticking out its head in a very solemn manner, as if listening. One of the girls, and the handsomest one, too, declared that she would not kiss a fellow for six months after eating any of *that thing*. That settled it and I told her so, and in her presence kicked over the box, and "that thing" waddled off to the river again. I washed my hands of the whole turtle brood. I was not going to let any measly animal like that, with his bones on the outside of him, stand in my way.

During our stay at the riverside home we made frequent trips to Iowa City, and learned what we could of it. We went across the river west, as well as some miles up the river, examining the settlements in these directions. The farm houses looked like most we had seen thus far in Iowa. They were snugly ensconced in nice situations among groves of young trees, or saplings, where clearings had been easily made for agricultural purposes. Most of the places seemed to be occupied by prosperous settlers. On a trip, up the river about two miles, we found a nice water-power flouring-mill, with the usual evidences of comfort found about such places.

We noted that the city was well laid out on fine rising grounds over-looking the river. The chief attraction was the State House, lately vacated as the Capitol of the State, and hereafter to be used as a State University, under the law. We thought then that the city was overdone in its trading houses for the amount of business

to be transacted. Many store-rooms were empty and idle. Boarding houses were entirely too numerous, now that the Capitol was removed. There were many fine residences in the city. Many of these were made of brick and had a very artistic appearance. The bricks were made near the town and their manufacture was an industrial feature of the place. Stone houses were not wanting either, but wood was the prevailing building material. The town as a whole was comfortable and prosperous, with an appearance of age about it. A curious thing was that the earliest settlers in the city, who had all the building sites to pick and choose from, were found in the worst locations. They generally selected bluffs for building places abutting on some creek or low ground, as if they pitted surface water against all other conditions.

We left our riverside boarding house and traveled north of the city. All along this road we found, from time to time, nice homesteads, and about two miles out we saw the first good apple orchard. About a mile and a half further out, at Rapid Creek, there was a water-power sawmill. About three miles further was our new boarding place on the Dubuque or old Military road. We were quartered in the home of an early settler. He knew much about the country and was nothing loath in telling it. His name was Lancaster, from "York State" as he termed it. He pointed with pride to his own possessions and to the opportunities for settlers on the rich "barrens" as the rolling area lying next to the timber was called. Such settlers,

he said, could make hay on the prairies and live comfortably in the barrens, as good settlers in Iowa should. I asked where the prairie was. He answered, everywhere in Iowa. Did I never see a prairie? I said, "never." He was astonished and said, did I not see any prairie about West Liberty, when coming up on the cars? I explained that the cars, running so cautiously in the mud, took my attention, so that I could see nothing else. "Boys," said he, turning to his stalwart sons, "Give this young fellow a horse in the morning to go out and ride over the Graham prairies." There was dignity in that. To see the prairie on horse-back was greatly ahead of doing the region around Iowa City on foot. The gentleman from "York State" was a comfortable man every way. He had a huge fire-place in his log house in which burned, on that cool April evening a rousing fire, and the wood was full length cord wood sticks, at that.

THE PRAIRIES OF IOWA.

The next morning the "boys" brought a mustang pony, called Prince, around to the door for me to ride in going out to see the prairies. They offered me a large pair of spurs, which I thought I did not need. The old gentleman looked at the pony and said, "Can you ride, boy?" I thought I could ride and said so. "Well," said he, "Take those spurs," and added, "you will see a heap more prairies with the spurs on." I put on the spurs and started. All went well for a mile or so until I left the set-

tlement roads and headed east through the barrens for the prairies, as directed. Here Prince got tired and manifested a desire to go back. I urged him on and even spurred him, but it did no good. He tried to lie down, but I beat that move by catching him with both spurs at once. He straightened up and went forward a little, but stumbled and fell, rolling me off on the ground. I kept clear in the fall and was up before he was and mounted again. I was mad. That infernal pony did that on purpose. His next move was to go home. I turned his nose eastward and drove the spurs in rapidly and fiercely. I determined to kill him, then and there, and borrow \$5.00 from someone and pay for the brute. He tried standing on his hind legs, but that only exposed a different part of his anatomy to the spurs. He would jump forward about ten feet at once and then jump sideways, and kept this up for a time. I was hot and the spurs worked faster. That measly caricature of a horse must die. He weakened at last and started at a fast gallop going east. Then the mean brute tried to rub me off on the young saplings, but when the spur on that side struck his ribs, thud, he grunted a little and avoided the trees. He was now galloping at his best. I crossed a creek somewhere, that the pony jumped. He carried me up a slope and came out on level ground without stopping.

But what was the matter? I had not passed a tree for some time. The pony could not run me against a sapling here. There were no trees, big or little, and none were in sight. I rode on. I did not want to stop

and neither did the pony. This was a great place for him. I sought higher ground, but as I traveled on for more than a mile it seemed no higher, just one wide stretch on every side for miles, with no tree nor shrub in all that space. I had no doubt of it. This was the PRAIRIE. I halted now, the pony was glad of it. I took note of my situation. I was over two miles east from the border of the prairie, and two or three miles from either the north or south sides of it. These were merely guesses at my location. Sitting on the pony and looking in any direction, except east, I could see the dim line of the barrens. As far as I could see eastward there was only prairie in sight. I sat there a long time, viewing the scene. The whole landscape was prairie and nothing else. Look where I would there was nothing but this grand plain to be seen, except a few long-legged birds walking around on the grass, which would not let me come near them. I think they were plover. I was so interested in the view around me that I took little note of them. The prairie with its silence and grandeur and marvelous expanse was a revelation to me. Without in fact having seen it I could not have conceived of anything so perfect and so peculiar.

I concluded to ride around that prairie, and accordingly took my course eastward, keeping the south line in view. I rode into the barrens at the east, and found an opportunity of feeding the pony, and myself as well. There was only a woman at home, but she gave me corn for the pony, and bread and milk and honey for myself.

When the meal was set out her little girl said, "Ma, did you give him the honey where the bees died?" It was a nice luncheon anyway.

On my return trip I kept to the north side of the prairie, but view it as I would it was all alike. The mystery to me was why this inviting land had not been settled first. Here was a tract of about six by five miles and not a soul on it. Even those residing on the barrens kept well back from the prairies.

There is another peculiar feature of the prairie in addition to being treeless, level and beautiful, that I may as well mention here, though I only learned it afterwards. It is that there are no pebbles nor gravel, nor fragments of rock, great or small, found anywhere in the prairie soil. The land is entirely clear of these. Eastern people would be astonished at this, as in their states the surface, in places at least, seems to consist largely of broken stone. Their plows are heavy clumsy tools with great heavy, cast-iron mold-boards, fitted for the occasion. These would be of no use on the prairie. They would not "scour." The Iowa plows are light and artistic with bright, shining, tempered steel mold-boards. They are handsome implements.

If an Iowa man had to "make garden" in any of the "rock bound" eastern states he would be lost. He would not know what to do with the surface rock. He would want to cart off the whole "garden patch" to macadamize the roads. Here, he has only to put seed in a rich,

black alluvial mould (which would all go through a fine sieve) and then wait for his green peas, tomatoes, cauliflower, potatoes and the like. No struggle with rock here—birds' nests are plentier than pebbles. I have never found any rock or stone of any kind in the barrens, nor in the timber land either. There is no stone anywhere, except the large boulders sometimes found on the prairies, which were brought there in the floating ice during the glacial age in the earth's formative period. There are gravel and sand cobblestones enough in the river beds everywhere. Whoever wants this kind of thing must go there to find it.

As we jogged homeward in the barrens, I saw in some small scattering hazel brush, a curious little fat squatty animal with three white stripes down its back and with a tail like a squirrel's. I concluded to ride it down, as it was not going fast and ran clumsily and close to the ground. I spurred sharply after it and would have got it but for an ox-driver who had two oxen in charge with a neck yoke on them, dragging a long chain. He yelled at me viciously to "stop that." I saw that the little beast was his, and I turned quickly westward and galloped off and left him and it.

I got back before sundown and found the head of the House of Lancaster sitting enjoying, as usual, his cordwood fire in that old fashioned fireplace. He asked very cordially after my trip. I gave my prairie experience and how it looked to me. He said I must have

traveled at least twenty-five miles. He next asked about the pony and how he behaved. I gave an account of him, too, and of all his mean instincts. The old gentleman laughed in a significant way. When the boys came in he said the joke was on them as they thought nobody could ride Prince but themselves. One of them said, "I think the joke is on Prince, father. He made the mistake of his life, and he has bloody sides to show for it now."

We were called to supper and pony and prairie were both forgotten. After a time I asked about the man that had the oxen in charge, that walked before them with a pole over his shoulders as if he were going fishing. I explained about his rescuing the little striped backed animal that I was after. They had me describe it again, and then I added, "I rode off and let the man have his pet." Then there was a great laugh. One of the boys, the slowest one, was eating pork-gravy and molasses and he sputtered it out so that he left the table. The old gentleman explained that it was a skunk I was after and that the man with the cattle did not care for it at all, only he did not want it run over near him. I did not know what a skunk was, nor understand the general ho, ho, ho, ho, that followed.

After supper I learned that while I was gone my uncle McBride had bargained with Mr. Lancaster to work a portion of his farm "on shares" and was to occupy a log house on the adjoining tract of land about half a mile off.

It was plain that I must now push my fortunes alone. I had heard good reports of Cedar Rapids as a rushing business point. It was only twenty miles off and the walking was good. I must get "into the swim" somehow. It would not do to waste any more time chasing the festive skunk through the barrens. Cedar Rapids must be a good place. Had it not a daily stage line, when the sloughs were passable, connecting it with Iowa City?

Next day I started afoot for the Rapids following the stage road. I stayed there only a day and two nights and left it neither richer nor wiser. I had heard much of "Western" where some religious sect was putting up a great college on the prairie. On leaving Cedar Rapids I decided to drop the stage road entirely and steer straight over the prairie for Western, a distance of about twelve miles. If Western or the adjacent settlement did not answer, I would see the prairie anyway. When I crossed the river leaving Cedar Rapids behind I was on the prairie at once. At this point it is prairie bottom land. I could see across it to the sand bluffs beyond, a distance of two to three miles. I could look the other way up the river and see further, but which ever way I looked it was all the finest plain that could well be imagined. Not a knoll nor a break in it all. Although the town was at hand, just across the river, still not a house was erected on this prairie, easy of access as it was, nor spade nor plough had ever disturbed the native grass. There was a single wagon trail across it but that was all. The grass had been burned

off the fall before and the new grass was now well up, and the whole tract was green and beautiful. When I reached the rising ground, to the southeast on the top of the bluffs, and looked back the whole expanse was seen at once and the picture was complete and unparalleled in beauty, with the sheen of its coloring glistening in the sun that day.

From this point I figured out my course for "Western College" of which I had heard so much and steered in that direction. It was ten miles to that place yet. I traveled gaily over the new land where no evidence or trace of man could be seen. The most I could see, except the prairie, was the few tree tops that I knew skirted the Cedar River. By the time I had gone about four miles from the bluffs these were not visible either. The prairie was handsome and to be alone on it was to me charming and inspiring. I took comfort in thinking that perhaps I was the first that had ever trod that soil. It had not been desecrated with placards telling us what medicine to take and where to buy it, nor what brand of cigar to smoke and where it could be had. You could get no light here, on such things, from the fellows who set traps for the unwary.

There is a general desire to note first events. There was a great opportunity for that in this new land, from the first governor to the first justice of the peace and the first baby cutting its first tooth. All this to my mind is a cheap distinction. Why should the first tooth be of more note than the next one? The most important thing for that baby to do would be to cut its eye teeth. But the

prairie was here and that was quite enough for me. At this point it could hardly be called rolling. From where I then was there was neither bluff nor tree to be seen; nothing but that wide expanse of rich, grassy landscape.

I dropped my musings as I saw some ducks flying low at a short distance from me. That made the picture enchanting. I watched them flying, in a given direction and others following along that line. I knew then that I was coming to a creek and was happy in the new relish given to the prairies. My surmise was right. The creek was soon reached. The ducks, on my approach, flew far up the stream and out of sight. The creek was peculiar in itself. It looked to be deep, as the water was moving without a ripple on it. There were no rocks nor gravel in its banks nor a pebble of any sort to be seen in it or near it. The black alluvial soil of the prairie was over two feet deep as indicated by the banks of the creek, where it had cut through the soil. The worst feature to me was that the creek was quite wide. There was no means of crossing it. The man who told me about "Western College" did not say a word about this creek. I wandered up it seeking a ford of some kind but that was futile as the prairie had never been crossed by any one but myself and I was not over it yet, either. As I looked for a crossing I found a duck egg. It was of a light blue color, like the sky. I could not take it with me and it would do no good to leave it there, so I concluded to "suck it," which I did at once and a very good lunch it was. This is what is

technically called a "prairie oyster." I found two more nice eggs a little further up stream, bright spots of sky on the prairie grass. I made prairie oysters of them also. I was in better shape now to contemplate that creek and finally concluded to jump it, if I could. I hunted for a narrow place, but there was none. I looked for some place where cattle might have crossed, but when I thought of it I knew that there never was a cow or steer there. The buffaloes were the last to range over it. I finally found a place where the bank had slid into the creek somewhat, on the off side. It was as wide there as anywhere, but the landing place would be lower and I could jump further. I would jump there. I took off my boots and socks and threw them across. I took off my coat and did the same with it. I took off my vest and pants and tied them up and sent them over also. I sent my hat last as I had forgotten it. I rolled my drawers up high, surveyed the ground, went back and took a run, and sprang from the bank for that low place, in good style. I lit at the edge of the water. I sank far over my knees in the mud. There I was. I got out easily but with enough prairie mud on me to make a small flower garden. There was no lack of water and after washing, I walked around till I dried, put on my clothes and was off in good order. I think I may note that I was the first to jump that creek and regale on prairie oysters on its bank.

I concluded to direct my course more to the south than I had been doing as Western College was at the

southeast corner of this prairie, and that was all I knew about it. Presently I could see the tree tops of some of the Iowa River timber system. This prairie extended from the barrens skirting that timber to the Cedar River. All of that immense area was one green lawn spread out as if for ornament.

I found Western easily enough. There was a man there driving stakes in the prairie. I asked for Western, and he said "this is it," pointing to the stakes. I left that joker and found a settler's house on the bluffs, a good half mile off and got dinner there. I learned that those stakes were all there was of Western; that there was not a brick nor a board of the town or college there yet. The college was to represent the United Brethren in Christ. A brick building was actually put up the following summer and the next winter it opened up as an educational concern. It never was much of a success. It was merely a sort of recruiting station for the army of the Lord and is removed now altogether.—I mean the recruiting station.

I crossed into Johnson County that afternoon and found a farmer that seemed to be looking for me. I contracted with him for the season, which meant, till the "snow flew." I was to be an agriculturist for the first few months and after harvest I was to help run a sawmill he was building in Shueyville over two miles from Western. I knew that the arduous duties of farming would require a rest, like a recess in school, and I stipulated for a vacation early in June. I commenced next day to earn the almighty

dollar. It would take time, as it looked to me, to make much of a pile, but I got along gaily in my new vocation and liked it.

In farming the work is mainly done by horses. The party in charge has little to do but steer them—that is enough. I got fat at it. Part of my duty was to grub young saplings on the barrens. This was not so nice. It hurt my feelings to destroy little trees in the prairie country, and it hurt my back to stoop low enough to get at the roots. I had to rest a good deal. On one occasion, when straightening my back a bit, a very slick three year old, black colt came along to investigate, and I dropped the mattock, got him up pretty close, caught his mane and jumped on his back. That was a surprised colt. He started across that forty acre tract at a great gait. Let him go. That was what I mounted for. He then went straight for the barn, jumped a little creek on the way and as he began to rise a sand hill near the stable I swung myself off by holding to his mane. I lit on my feet and started back. I enjoyed the ride and hoped the colt did too! The farmer's family did, as they had a good view of it and it was a free circus. I was soon after relegated to the plow.

Time passed swiftly and June had come, and my vacation was to commence in the middle of June. I wanted to see the groves and prairies at their best and judged this to be the time. The leaves were well out on the trees, there were bright blossoms on the plants in the

barrens, the grass on the prairie land all round was waving in the sun, and all nature was gay.

I started out afoot on my vacation tour, hopeful and happy. I crossed the river at Roberts' ferry on my way to Iowa City. After getting clear of the river timber and reaching some settlements in the barrens on the edge of the prairie, I turned to the west in the Green Castle direction to take in the grand prairie lying south of the river and its barrens. After traveling in that direction for two miles or more, I made a discovery, I thought. It was a dainty little lake without a tree near it. It was fairly out on the prairie and had neither outlet nor inlet. It was only about one hundred yards long and not quite so broad, but it was clear and beautiful. I learned afterwards that it was "Swan Lake," but there were no swans on it then. The wild flowers were thick on the prairie around it, sweet-williams, prairie-pinks and wild roses were abundant down to the water's edge. The prairie grass waved in the wind and the passing clouds made shadows on the grass and on that pretty little lake. These shadows were dispelled by the sun, and light and shadow seemed to chase each other over lake and prairie incessantly, till all seemed like some enchanted scene that might flit and be gone when I looked again. I lingered there long, watching the changes in sunshine and shadow and thought how beautiful was this great land of the west.

I passed along comfortably for a few miles examining the various blossoming plants found on the way.

Each rise in the surface offered new beauties to be examined and wondered at. There were love-darts as the girls call a light colored flowering plant. I found "grass widows" hiding on nice sunny slopes, but one is liable to be disappointed in them as they are only a pretty, bluish flowering grass. There were more flowering things than I knew the names of, but the prairie itself, with its rich abundant verdure, was attractive enough if there had been no flowers at all.

By this time I was nine miles from the ferry and further from Iowa City than when I crossed it. I began to realize that I was tired. At this rate vacation is worse than grubbing. In fact, I began to think that vacations in general were a change for the worse. While I was meditating in this way I saw two teams coming on the trail, heading for the southeast. I reached the track and got a ride to the city. The men were going to Muscatine for lumber. They said I could see this prairie just as well from the wagon and that it was all prairie up to the grist-mill on the river. The teams followed the Clear Creek road to the "grist-mill," and to our left there was prairie the whole way. We got to the city in the afternoon, the men fed their teams and we fed ourselves and all were improved. They started for their lumber and I for the Lancaster house.

I found Mr. Lancaster as jolly and hearty as ever, but he was not at his fireplace now. I found that my uncle was established in a little log house on the land he

had rented. I rested and read the New York Ledger for a few days and enjoyed my vacation. The spirit of travel was again on me and I set out afoot and explored the Cedar River prairie lying west of Gower's ferry. It is an immense area of prairie bottom land, the richest and finest tract of the kind I had seen so far. The grass was so long that I did not try to cross this tract to the river. I have since seen a very much larger and also a much richer body of prairie bottom land on the Little Sioux River in Woodbury County, Iowa. It is ten miles wide in places. It extends to the Missouri River, I believe, but I do not know the distance. I have ridden over about eight to ten miles square of it. I have seen grass on it so high that I could not see over it when riding on horseback, and so rank that a horse could not breast it. They had to follow the trails there or not go at all.

Leaving the Cedar River bottom land I took to the rolling prairie and followed that a few miles and then back to Lancaster's through the barrens. I found them wonderfully attractive. The young trees were pictures in themselves. On the sides of the bluffs would be found clumps of three to fifteen wild crab apple trees in full bloom. Again I would see wild cherry trees in groups, plum trees in quantities, and wild grape vines covering everything they could find to cling to. There were white thorns all over the barrens in full bloom. The fragrance of all this wealth of bloom was delightful. These barrens were rich and picturesque and easily converted into

a home. It is no wonder that the early settlers took to these blooming, sheltered sites. I got back with a tired feeling of vacation on me, but that wore off. I explained to McBride what I had seen and how charming the barrens were out there. He said that I need not have gone so far, as he could have shown me crab apple and cherry blossoms back in the field and that plums were all around there. He added that he would not "cross the road" to see a white thorn any way. Mary said to me, "Never mind, I will go with you down to the creek, when we can get the team, and we will fish and hunt for all kinds of blossoms and birds and may see deer down there, too."

My uncle wanted to go out to see some land that he thought of buying. We all went and Mary and he and I had a jolly ride out through the Scott township prairies and back through the edge of Pleasant Valley prairies to the city. We had luncheon as we came back on the Scott prairies at a creek where the horses were watered. We had a nice day of it and enjoyed it greatly. Mary found astonishing flowers on the prairies and picked them, too. The Scott township land would not answer. It was the finest, richest land to be found but McBride's objection to it was that there was no timber on it. I could have told him that before we started, but no matter we saw more prairie and had a picnic, to boot.

I had no need now to ask where the prairies were. I had seen prairies in various parts of the state, and had traveled over some of them, as well as over half the

prairies in this county. They were everywhere, in Iowa at least, and rich and fair as the heart of man could desire. Poet Bryant took a long shot at the prairies in this way:

"These are the gardens of the desert, these
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no name—
The Prairies."

That is good poetry for Bryant, who, as far as I can learn, never saw the prairies. He seems to imagine them as a sort of oasis sitting in a desert. There is no desert in Iowa, but plenty of the "boundless and beautiful." What matter? If he never saw the prairie, that was his loss. Still, it would be interesting to know, if a prairie is boundless, where the desert comes in.

Prairie is a French word. That is where Bryant hung his harp, "for which the speech of England has no name," you see. The word means "meadow" or more closely "grassy field." This fails, however, as all words must, to give an accurate conception of the Iowa prairie. This definition gives a limited idea involving cultivation and fencing. Our conception of the prairies cannot be trimmed down to suit agricultural terms. The great Iowa prairies had no limitation of this kind and no parallel, except perhaps to some extent in adjoining states.

My vacation ended and again I found myself pursuing the farm programme. About the last of August the saw mill got under way and presented the same monotony as the farm. We cut logs into all sorts of lumber

for buildings and everything else, apparently. There was no break in the buzz of the saw, except for a half day when everybody went fishing. Their notion of fishing was to drag a seine in the river. I waded and kept the thing clear of rocks, and if it got too deep swam a bit. We raked in about three hundred pounds of fish in an hour which were divided out fairly to all engaged in that spree. The blacksmith's wife, in Shueyville, did better than that when the saw mill was running. True to the instincts of mill owners generally, these men polluted the water in the creek that passed through Shueyville and that hurt the fish. But before they died the blacksmith's wife would get hold of them, grabbing them out with her hands. She had no competitor till a steer driver came along with a saw log. He took his gad and attempted to get above the woman and reach the fish with that pole. He did not know that pond in the creek, nor how to fish in it. He let his greed at sight of a dying fish lead him out on the floating sawdust and he fell in and out of sight. The sawyer stopped the mill and we all ran to assist him. By the time we reached the spot he was crawling out on the other side. Such a sight as he was with water and saw-dust! The sawyers greeted him with a yell that was refreshing. They cheered that ox-driver as if he had been Venus rising out of the sea. But it did not help him as he started for his oxen quite crestfallen. He did not look at all like a Venus, with the water dripping out of his overalls as he went off. That steer driver wanted no more fish.

The only other thing to recount is that I visited Iowa City again in "haying time," and for the reason that my farmer-man insisted on cutting his hay crop with scythes, when he had a machine to cut wheat. In short, I declined to mow. I had business in Iowa City that would detain me until the hay was cut. I started on foot, accordingly, and on the way I concluded to see the bottom land prairie on Clear Creek, near the Iowa River. When I turned the bend in the creek at that point I saw before me what seemed to me hundreds of white tents set up in a very long row on that bottom land. It scared me as I did not look for anything of the kind. I soon recollected that it was a lot of Mormon emigrants bound for Salt Lake City. It was an awful distance to travel in that way. To think of those women taking such a trip and pulling a cart besides was fearful to contemplate. All this for a faith and a fractional interest in a man. I shied clear of the lot as I did not think them safe. The women, I understood, were yoked up in couples like cattle to haul the carts. I would not trust either men or women so debased as that. This was worse than mowing or grubbing either. Those women thought that they were doing the will of God. Those bucks that hitched them up were their gods. Superstition when it gets a hold like this is extremely brutalizing.

Bryant might have taken a crack at them in
this fashion:

"These are the women of the Prophet, these
The teams of the desert, pulling and dragging,
And matchless in any land as stupid dolts,
The Mormons."

These creatures, working like cattle, were simply so much material to be used for the greed of Brigham and his apostles in their religious schemes.

I will now proceed with our log cutting. We kept the saw buzzing until the snow flew, which was on the 18th day of November, 1856. We had been told by the old settlers that the winters were hard and dry. That there was little or no snow, and that cattle lived out on the barrens and praries all winter and only occasionally required feed in the coldest periods; that the protection afforded by the timber and ravines in the barrens was all that was needed if the farmer bridged over the cold spells and blizzards with plenty of feed. I believed all this and was surprised at the way the snow set in. It commenced to rain on the 18th of November and kept it up till in the afternoon and then the snow began and fell in broad, wet flakes till night. The next morning the snow lay thick on the ground and did not go off till the April following.

That day I settled up my agricultural and milling business and retired with "my pile" to the Lancaster place.

FESTIVE WINTER AND BLIZZARDS.

My uncle had got a new frame addition to his log cabin and could easily keep me there. He said it was big enough for four now. I thought that was nice and went in the new part. I was startled as much as when I saw the Mormons, for there was Mary holding out

a nice new baby girl for me to admire and telling this Prairie Pink all about me in a strange dialect. Miss Baby was about two months old and a bright little thing, who made friends with me before the winter was over. I soon got acquainted in the neighborhood and knew everyone for miles around. Everyone knew me and we were mutually gratified.

There was no Thanksgiving that year, nor for many years afterwards. It had not come up in the land at that time. This turkey feast is here now and that gives foot-ball a chance. By the way, foot-ball had not come up either. It was utterly unknown. When I think of it, what had we to be thankful for without foot-ball?

The early winter had caught most of the settlers unprepared for it. Their corn was unhusked and their hay was unhailed, when they had any. It was stacked where it was cut, out on the prairie, ready to haul home. These things were remedied, as far as might be, before the coldest weather came. It snowed a good deal and got colder as time passed. There was no hope of a thaw till spring. It was now, that warm stabling and a good house were such treasures. About the middle of December one of Lancaster's boys started for a place near Muscatine to bring home a sister and her children. I went along to drive one of the teams. We had long sleds and a dog. We got to a big barn and a lodging house near West Liberty soon after noon the first day. The snow was falling fast, but we attempted to push on. After two miles of blinding, drifting,

blizzard we turned back for the big barn and the lodging house. On the way back I could not see the team just ahead of me. I could, however, see the dog who kept the road between the teams and I followed him. We got back to shelter and were compelled to tie up there for a day. On that same evening, when I was following the dog, a man and a woman, in a wagon, lost their way on the Scott township prairie in this blizzard. They had been to church in Iowa City and were new to the prairies. They were found next day, both frozen dead. The team found its way to a haystack somewhere and was alive.

We started again on our way and crossed the Cedar River on the ice where the ferry was, in the summer time. We found the family and brought that woman and her children and her goods back with us snugly enough, reaching home the same day. There was a fire on the Lancaster hearth that evening, you may be sure. The old gentleman asked how we found the roads. The son answered "all well broken except at the ferry and there it was very deep as nobody lives near that place." The settlers held it as a cardinal virtue to go out after every snow storm and "break the roads." They would drive their teams over the track repeatedly or open new lines if the old track was too deep with drifts.

I could now understand why the settlers could not go out on the prairies. It was want of capital. I could see that a man who lodged in a log cabin in the timber and could barely live there, could not exist at all on

the prairie. His scanty means would not be sufficient to erect a dwelling and the farm buildings necessary to brave such snows and blizzards as we had then. The settlers knew all this and approached the prairies cautiously. They would add a prairie tract to the timber home, when they were able and thus get the benefit of both prairie and barrens. The winter blasts and storms were the dread of the pioneers. If Bryant had written something like this for winter reading, he would have hit the mark:

These are the terror of the settler, these
The Arctic blasts, howling and freezing,
For which the land of England has no name
The *Blizzards*.

The settlers knew the blizzards and how to avoid their rigor. They housed themselves and their stock and kept in the shelter while the storm lasted and then went out and broke the roads again.

The storms of winter did not cut off sociability and friendly intercourse among the settlers. It rather helped that as they considered the winter a season of rest. The young folk considered this time of year a blessing in disguise for it was the season of parties, spelling schools, and the like. It might storm as it would but these things must be attended to while the sleighing was good. The settlers fraternized with each other, recognizing the pioneering tie as sacred. This was no empty theory. Let a settler be sick and he had the assistance of the whole community. They cut and hauled his firewood, and husked

his corn, if necessary. In short, they set him on his legs again, as far as their assistance could do so. The settlers, in their instincts, were simple hearted, straight forward and social. The winter gave them great opportunities for visiting at each other's homes. The Lancaster fire-place was only one of hundreds found in the settlements. These architects built great chimneys outside their houses, connecting them with open fire-places inside, around which the sturdy pioneers gathered for sociability and good cheer. There they discoursed of their old homes and their native states. The new land with its hardships and pleasures made them neighbors and friends.

The spelling school was the most enjoyable thing that one could well imagine. There was much mirthful sport in the choosing of sides and getting the girls and boys fairly settled in the right classes and places, let the spelling go as it would. The school houses were worth all that they cost for spelling schools alone. Good spelling should be encouraged. The directors thought so when they warmed up the school houses in sleighing time for these sprees. The ride home was where the fun came in. It beat the spelling contest. The young ladies were healthy and blooming and when nicely tucked up in the sleds under buffalo robes and wraps, looked comfortable and very pretty. The young fellows thought so, and somehow managed to get under those robes too, in those long bob-sleds which were just the thing for the occasion. I don't see how it is, but I feel as if I would like to be at a spelling school again and have another jolly sleigh ride.

Probably the character of the years runs in cycles as to both temperature and precipitation. I learned that several winters in succession prior to 1856 were cold and dry with little snow. I know that for several years after that the winters were severe and the snowfall great. The winter of 1856-57 was long remembered by all old settlers as the worst for cold and snow that Iowa had ever seen. Afterwards, I got well acquainted with two girls, who at that time were about twelve years old and who had often been in Tipton that winter. They distinctly recollected the great snow drifts that lay between Tipton and their home, two and one-half miles south. The road on the west side had a stake and rider worm fence. The snow on drifting over some open fields on the west caught on this fence and covered it up, road and all, well over the tops of the fence stakes. These young ladies could not afford to take the traveled road but took to the snow-banks and traveled on the top of the snow-drift that covered the fence, from their home to Tipton, Sunday after Sunday, in going to church and Sunday-school. There was glory in that but rather cold withal. They estimated the great drifts in the worst places for miles and miles around there at from eight to ten feet deep. They were right, too.

It is curious to note the number of shifty expedients that a community, cut off from the great outside world, will resort to in order to keep tedium and ennui at bay. The spelling school was only one feature in this direction. The older men organized debating societies and

aired their vanity and oratory at the same time in the school houses, as a winter recreation.

In our neighborhood a number of young men met and organized as a "Theatre Club" and practiced assiduously in a school house near "Lancaster's Corner." This was a new departure and became interesting. I was in the club and was unanimously elected stage manager. The practical difficulty was that there was no stage and I could not control any of the actors if there had been. They settled everything, in true democratic style, by vote. They next decided to give exhibitions in that school house and sell tickets at ten cents each. This was getting alarming. In a few evenings more it was resolved to commence with Julius Caesar and Toodles, as one young man said, "both good comedies and enough for one evening." I was scared and wanted to resign but they would not stand that. There was nothing for it but Caesar. The original text was largely cut out leaving only a small fraction for each member. We committed and practiced on it for weeks. I never got so tired of anything as I did of "old Caesar" as they called it. We next took up Toodles. There was hardly enough of it to suit them and a dance was improvised. We practiced on Toodles, dance and all, with satisfaction. By that time "Old Caesar" was forgotten and had to be done all over again. It was voted to have an exhibition at once. Then arose the question of costumes and equipments. That was all easily fixed, as the dancing girls helped to rig the boys out and made real Roman togas

of the latest style for them. All went well enough until the boys exhibited their new daggers to be used in the play. When these were shown to a fine strapping young man who was to impersonate "Old Caesar" he declined flatly to play, at all, if the boys were to have "them knives." That settled "them knives" and the boys had to get tin daggers and make the most of them. A night was set, and announced in the neighboring school houses. The house was filled and Caesar came off triumphantly. It was the most comical thing ever presented anywhere. Toodles and the dance were immense too. The crowd laughed, cheered and yelled and enjoyed everything. Well they might for they never saw anything like it before and never would see its like again.

All we had to do now was to dispose of the receipts, but it took several meetings to do that. The treasurer was instructed on each occasion by unanimous vote, to serve the troupe with hot punch. There was a proposition to give the cash to the dancing girls for their services. But would they take it? That must be found out. It took several meetings of the whole troupe to do so. At the last meeting the treasurer, after the punch was on deck, announced that there was no more cash in the treasury; that it had all gone for hot punch and nothing was left to pay for the pitcher and some glasses that the boys smashed. That dissolved the "Theatre Club."

Spring was now practically at hand and we must get to work again. No more play for us now. Caesar and

Toodles, and hot punch, like the winter snows, were now things of the past; but they were great fun while they lasted.

PRAIRIE CHICKENS AND OTHER GAME.

The several school house entertainments were all evening performances. The day time, in my case, was given over to hunting the prairie chicken. I saw little of that bird till after the winter snows set in and then they appeared in immense numbers all over the barrens. They seemed to me to have come in for shelter and for food. They flocked in on the corn fields where the corn was left unhusked. Lancaster had over forty acres of corn that stood out all winter and it was covered with prairie chickens in the daytime. They made great havoc with the grain. They were handsome game, too, and looked very pretty hanging to the cornstalks or perched on the trees.

I shot numbers of them but we did not consider them good eating. They were hard and dry, however cooked. But they were in great demand in eastern restaurants and brought fifteen cents each in Iowa City for shipment. I commenced shooting for this market, and besides the fun of hunting I realized about thirty dollars a month for some time. I did not wake up to the importance of this market till it was well on in the winter. McBride hunted, too, and marketed the game we brought down. I made more in this way in winter than in the same length of time in the summer at agriculture or the sawmill. I never

trapped any. There was no fun in that. I shot quail in abundance but we cooked these for our daily food. The chickens were plentiful for many years after that. But, as the prairies were settled up they became scarcer and scarcer till now there is neither prairie nor chicken to be seen in the land.

I never saw much of the larger game, that was in fact plenty in Iowa. I saw wild turkeys on two or three occasions and once I saw a flock fly up in a tree and sun themselves. I saw deer on only three occasions and very grand they looked, but not better than nice Jersey heifers do out on the barrens. I think the horns of the Jersey are the finer of the two and the tail of the Jersey is much better looking than that of the deer. The first deer I saw were apparently grazing, and then lay down on a knoll. I got my gun and went after them and they went leisurely off and across a ravine. I followed and found their tracks easily; and found a large tree-top that lay across their path in the ravine. They did not go around it nor did it trouble them. They simply jumped it. I stopped there. If they were that kind of animal I did not want them. Quail was good enough for me and better than deer anyway. On the other occasions I did not go after them at all.

I never saw a wolf. I heard plenty of them. The only trouble I had with wolves was sometime after our family came out west. My sister, a good-looking girl, who resembled me, was entertaining a beau one evening in winter, and I was upstairs in bed. Near midnight she came up

and waked me and said her visitor was afraid to go home as the wolves were howling awful on the prairies and that he lived out there. Ha, ha, ha, ha! So I got up and dressed and saw him home. She waited till I came back and had a nice lunch ready and she told me not to tell. The young man did not venture out again at night. For some time that girl was very nice to me and had pies and things ready for me when I came home late, see? So much for wolves.

When the spring came and the chickens were on the prairie again—their sonorous bass note, “booah,” in the fresh spring morning was musical and invigorating. This was their call and their love song and gladdened the heart of all who heard it, as well as being a tribute to the female part of their flock. They took to “nest-hiding” and I took to agriculture again. This time there was no grubbing nor mowing in it, nor any vacation either. My new venture was at Hoosier Grove, in Linn County, on a fine rich tract of barrens with a rolling prairie tract added. The Colonel was rich and kept bees. He rented some garden land to a bow-legged old bachelor to cultivate in water melons and onions. We got on placidly in all our agricultural pursuits. The Colonel was of southern blood and his wife was a southern lady. She made cheese, on which we regaled, and she kept ducks, that roosted on the porch. The Colonel offered me a dollar to shoot those ducks. I declined as it was worth more, if that southern woman found it out.

But I got a chance to use the gun soon afterward. One Sunday morning there was a mink got after those ducks, without any dollar or other inducement, except perhaps the hope of a breakfast. The unexpected generally happens and so it was this time with the mink. There was a hunt after him one Sunday morning, and he took refuge in a rail pile in a big barn yard, extending to the creek—the headquarters of the mink. But he had no time to go there. I was in the corn crib writing, as it was warm weather, and that was a nice cool place to enjoy the Sabbath. I heard the Colonel calling for me and finally I came out. The whole family were there, old bachelor and all, surrounding that rail pile. The Colonel said, "Where the blazes were you?" I put the counter question, "What do you want?" He said, "Take that gun and shoot that ——— mink as soon as you see him." I took the gun. It was a good shot gun of the rifle pattern and loaded and cocked. I stood near the end of the rail pile and watched. I saw the mink presently and fired and it went over endways. The watermelon bachelor jumped and yelled as if seized with a fit. After quieting down, he explained that I had shot that mink right through between his legs. I wanted to pacify him and said his feet were wide apart and up on the rails, and that any one might shoot between such legs as his, in that position, with safety. He seemed to get worse than before. The Colonel told the bow-legged hoosier to keep quiet as he was not hurt. Next the boy broke out whimpering, that I had spoiled the skin, so he

could do nothing with it. This was another case for the Colonel. He said to shut up and added, "What in —— did we come out here for except to spoil that mink's skin." *Moral*—Never go mink hunting with a bow-legged old bachelor on Sunday. Smiling peace returned, the ducks came back to the porch, and we all lunched off honey and cheese and onions and were happy.

I saw the first settler actually living on the prairie about three miles from this place. He had a little frame house up. His team was hitched to the hind end of a wagon-bed feeding out of a trough swung there. Two cows were grazing near the house. There were some furniture and stores in the house but scant enough. There was a woman there with a far-away look in her eyes and two children who did not seem to need a missionary, but they were not "far out upon the prairie," merely on the edge of it. There was a man there, also, who was gaunt and sallow and skinny. He had the ague and looked as if he was used to it. The family were from Illinois. As a whole this venture did not look promising.

INDIAN SUMMER, *et al.*

I gave up agriculture. There was too much competition in that line for me to make it remunerative. I had no regrets at quitting it. I think that the grainger element parted with me without a pang. At least there were no resolutions of sorrow passed by any of the rural clubs or societies. It was just as well, for I always disliked notoriety and display.

Next, I put in some time on school teaching. But that did not answer very well either. To be shut up "day in and day out" with a lot of active, noisy, yelling children of all ages, with the natural instincts strong in them, was too much for me. I gave that up, too. There was nothing agreeable about it, except drawing the salary and that was so meagre that it made me melancholy. When you consider the compensation, about two hundred dollars a year for from six to eight months' time—two terms, and the other months yielding nothing, and then figure out the most economical expenses and make a decent provision for bouquets for the girls and tickets to shows and the like, there would not be over fifty cents a year left. To accumulate enough, at that rate, to buy and equip a home and buy nice, soft, warm furs to roll a girl up in to keep out the blizzards would take at least seven thousand years. No girl would wait that length of time. Not that any one of them wanted me that I ever heard of. Anyway, a girl does not like a long engagement. She wants the bridesmaids and orange blossoms and wedding tour right in sight. My prospects were not alluring in that way. After dropping school teaching I felt that I was not handicapped and could look the girls in the face with better heart, but still they were shy of me. Yet, I felt better as I could now hope for something to "turn up" instead of being weighed down by such a dismal certainty.

Having cut loose from all entangling alliances the great question was, what next? I was rather in-

different as to what. I was quite willing to be useful and helpful to my fellow citizens, if by that means I could help myself. There must be a *quid pro quo* in all these things as it would never do to have it all on one side. I thought of the practice of law as my goal and wondered how I might reach it. I consulted a lawyer on this matter and was encouraged to try that calling. It could hardly pay less than my other pursuits paid. He said that to be a good lawyer required great and unremitting assiduity and an unlimited capacity for hard work. He also said, "If you are willing to be useful come into this office and try it for a few months if you desire." I took that offer and went there at once. He put me to reading English history. I saw the advantage of a training outside of the law and took a course in the State University of a couple of years or more. I was now fully occupied.

The office work assigned to me, in copying and writing was very considerable. There were no type-writing machines known then. I saved copies of the papers I made that I might be prepared to make similar papers again. My University work received great care and attention, too. I was soon given sundry duties that took me to most of the county seats near Iowa City. These trips gave me rare opportunities for seeing the prairies, and I enjoyed them greatly. I was once commissioned for Grundy Center. I had to go by way of Marshalltown and from that point I rode a pony the rest of the way. This was in the fall, and in Indian summer, as well.

Indian summer came in October and generally lapped over into November. The weather was warm and pleasant, making everything seem softer and more agreeable than at any other time of the year. There was a sort of lull in the energy of the seasons. The summer's heat and thunder storms were of the past. The rains and winds of early autumn were over. The first frosts had come and gone and had turned the foliage from green to gold and russet and all the bright hues and shades and tints found in the woods in fall. All nature seemed in a blissful calm and the land was enveloped in a mellow, dreamy atmosphere that lent a charm to the scenery and to all objects around us. Bryant should have seen this rare glory of the prairies and wooded barrens and basked in their ripened beauty. He would have struck out in this fashion in adoration of those rare days:

These are the glory of the seasons, these
The peerless days, hazy and radiant,
For which the land of Europe has no name,
Indian summer.

I have always thought that this period had the appearance of a veil spread out and extending over us all and that we were nearer to each other, by that rare covering, than at any other time. Just as if a bright, handsome woman with a very gauzy veil covering her head, should spread it over her own head and mine at the same time. It would be a little Indian summer, all our own. What a lovely game it would be, in the long winter even-

ings by the cozy fireside, to play Indian summer in that way!

I can picture the period when the work of creation was nearly finished and when the Lord made man and breathed into him the breath of life. I imagine that breath to have spread over the Garden of Eden, like an Indian summer in Iowa, and that Adam woke up in a mellow sea of glory, like that which covers the prairie before me. When Adam got his bearings he found the Lord doing the fall planting and covering the bulbs in a garden to the eastward and making fruit trees to grow out of the ground. Just what our settlers should do when any new member breathes the breath of life in their Eden. Those glorious days were Nature's compliment and offerings to the early residents of Iowa. At that time Indian summer was constant and beautiful and the balmy days came like a blessing to the sturdy settlers. But, for whatever reason I know not, there is no longer an Indian summer in the land. Those who knew it and hailed it with joy are, in the main, gone, too, probably to enjoy a greater glory elsewhere.

I had left the Iowa River bottom land and was well out on the Grundy county prairie. The pony was traveling gaily towards Grundy Center, I supposed, but I could see neither tree nor house—nothing but ripened grass—in all this open expanse. I had a good idea of the direction I was to take, and was confidently following a well defined trail which I had no doubt, led to that town. The prairie was covered with a heavy growth, turned brown by

the frost. Such a wealth of ripe uncut grass I had never seen before. It extended for miles in every direction. It was the same grand sight wherever I looked. I pressed on and presently some buildings appeared in view and this was Grundy Center. It was a prairie town throughout, not a tree near it. The buildings were small frame structures and few of them. They were scattered around a broad square, clumsy frame building, with a shingle roof. This was the Court House. Everything was snug and correct in it and the legal affairs in as good shape as if the town had been built of solid masonry and surrounded with a forest.

I got through with my business and left the next day returning by way of Eldora, in Hardin county. I assume that the distance between these points is about twenty miles and most of the way over the Grundy county prairies. That was a charming ride. It was endless prairie, and drowsy silence, and placid Indian summer throughout. I noticed, at Grundy Center, that the farms were mostly on a creek running near the town. It was the same way at Eldora. There were no timber nor barrens there, but the settlements were near creeks or on the creek bluffs, the farms being half bluff and half prairie. The hay was cut on the open prairie land and hauled home. This abundance, nature placed at their doors, or rather, they placed their doors handy to the abundance.

I came by way of Eldora to visit old Philadelphia friends, whom I had not seen for years. One was an editor in that town and like all his brethren knew every-

thing and everybody. The other, a farmer, was plodding along well enough. He was formerly a machinist and had some difficulty in fitting the solid accuracy of that craft to the loose happy-go-lucky manner of farming in those days. I had very agreeable visits and advertised my calling as far as might be and rode off happy next day in the mellow Indian summer. This fine prairie reminded me of the old missionary hymn that was sung in the Sunday schools in the east. It ran thus:

"Far out upon the prairies
Where many children dwell,
Who never read the Bible
Nor hear the Sabbath bell."

It would never pay to sing that to a western audience. They would know that there were no children, nor any one else, "far out upon the prairies." Still that was a good tune to take up a collection by—in the east. I wonder how much of the missionary literature is like that? My opinion on such topics would have little weight, but it is this: That there is more healthy elevating moral force in the prairies than in all the "Sabbath bells" that could be rung there; that the most depraved, dangerous and totally incorrigible brutes, found in the land, live in the large cities and are very familiar with the clanging of the church bells.

I got back to Iowa City in good time and was glad to take up the old routine of office work again.

Fires were an important feature in the economy of both the barrens and the prairies. The redundancy of the grass and vegetable growth must be got rid of by some means, annually, and no way so cheap and effective as by fire. The law recognized the right to set out these fires and only provided for the punishment of such as did so maliciously or without using the proper precautions. It was not the legal aspect that I desired to notice, but the fires themselves. These fires were usually set out in the evening, to enable those near enough to have the pleasure of seeing them. Nothing looked finer or grander than a good prairie fire. Several places along on the windward side of the area to be burned off were fired at the same time. The grass would then burn up in a long line of flame which traveled rapidly across the prairie. The wind might turn and drive it in any direction but in whatever way the flame traveled it was always to the observer very attractive. The flames would rise from one to five feet, depending on the amount of grass to be consumed. Those red, leaping tongues of flame were thrilling, and held the eye as if by magic. The fires were sometimes set out just before the winter commenced, but oftener early in spring. In going on my business trips, I came back, when I could, in the evening on the railroad and saw many fires in that way. The long line of fire sweeping across a prairie and going as fast as a horse could trot was dazzling and grand. The cars raced past it and left it behind, but the memory of those bright lines of flame sweeping the prairies remains

with me still. I have wished all my life that I might own whole townships of prairie land just for the pleasure of burning off the grass and witnessing again the destruction of that generous abundance.

A rare opportunity now presented itself of seeing the Missouri prairies. I had business in Saint Joseph, and in Atchison and Holt Counties, Missouri, which would take me over the Missouri River bottom land and upland enough, too. I started in good spirits, expecting to visit an old Philadelphia friend about twenty miles east of Saint Jo. and spend Sunday there.

I reached Glenwood, Iowa, on Friday and had to stop over night on business. I was out early and ready to start on Saturday morning for St. Jo. The hotel where I stopped, and the best one I think, ran a free hack to and from the trains as an inducement to the public to stop at that house. When the time drew near I urged the landlord to get out his hack and be ready. He said that was his business. I began to think that I was interested in it, too. I was out with my grip and saw the train coming in. I ran, but the town was on a bluff over a mile from the depot and the road not very direct, either. I steered straight for the station but got into a slough and had to go back to the road. I got to the depot just as the train moved off. I was very hot and sat down and panted a while. Presently the hotel hack came along and I went back to town in it.

Here I was, but what could I do? At least I would not stay at that hotel till Monday. I would go

round and tell that landlord what I thought of him. Evidently my opinion was not agreeable, as he ordered me off. I was now hotter. But as he got noisy I got calm. I could see that he had played this trick on purpose. I had read law enough to know that "there is no wrong without a remedy" and I would pursue that remedy. This was not only a legal wrong but an unparalleled outrage. I was now getting hot again, but curbed myself and thought of my damages. It was an action of trespass on the case. The whole *vi et armis* element was entirely out of it. It was clearer than any case of the kind I had read in the books so far. I would commence it at once. I sought my attorneys and explained it to them. They thought that I was excited and wanted me to wait, and said that they had never heard nor read of such a suit before. But I was not going to let an opportunity of trying such a clear trespass on the case suit slip that way. I got paper and prepared the original notice myself, thanks to my office training, and went with the sheriff and had it served immediately. My attorneys would file the petition in time.

I hired a livery man to take me to the ferry on the Missouri River, about seven miles from Glenwood. I went to Plattsmouth and stayed there over Sunday. To encourage my legal advisers I wrote them explaining that I was calm enough then and that my instructions in the case now were to make it as harassing and tedious and expensive as possible, but at *defendant's cost*; to take six or eight depositions in Iowa City to show the value of my time.

To make an end of this case I will add that soon after I got home to Iowa City I received a letter from my attorneys showing a settlement of my action. The hash-peddler had weakened, backed down, and paid \$30.00 and costs for his spree. I got half and that closed my action on the case, which, for illustrative purposes, should have gone into the books.

I reached St. Jo. on Monday and found my Philadelphia friend and had him go with me through Holt and Atchison counties. I was after some land agents who had overstepped themselves in some land transactions and gobbled up too much. They must now make restitution. I used my friend as a lay figure in visiting the local "land offices" and bargaining for land. I was preparing him for a witness as to prices, but that in the end was not required as I got the reconveyances as soon as these fellows "saw my hand."

We still had the prairies to examine on our return. When we came to investigate the Missouri River bottom land opposite Oregon in Holt County we found that its glory had departed. The greater part of it, and the best, too, was under cultivation. It could no longer be classed among the grand prairies, but would be set down in the statistical tables as so many farms, producing so many bushels of corn. The brightest and grandest prairie must come to such statistics at last. We rode over that bottom land and learned that the crop of corn then on it would yield one hundred bushels per

acre. As an agriculturist I fully believed it and so did my farmer friend. It was an immense crop of great, white corn. The upland prairies in the counties we had seen differed from the Iowa prairies very greatly. They were not so level nor nearly so extensive. They did not seem to be so rich either, except that great tract of bottom land on the Missouri River. On the uplands the settlements at that time were made all over the prairies, as well as on the barrens and bluffs. The prairie in that part of the state was quite rolling and bluffy and not so desirable as in Iowa. These counties of Missouri were like the southern tier of counties in Iowa, excepting perhaps Fremont county, in that tier, which is very fine. Missouri was called a slave state, but we saw no slaves there in our travels. It was a rich and prosperous state, but will not compare favorably with Iowa. I returned home with a renewed admiration for our own prairies.

THE PASSING OF THE PRAIRIES.

The law work, from the first day that I entered the office, with the auxiliary studies, took my whole time. That meant twelve to fourteen hours per day devoted to that alone. But I liked the law and prospered in it. I was admitted to the bar in a reasonable time after I commenced the work. Afterwards I had an office of my own. My assiduity never relaxed. I was referee, notary public and master in chancery, or anything to keep the great legal work well in hand. I served a short term on

the bench in the Eighth Judicial District. I was the law partner of a great lawyer, my first preceptor, and the firm was well known as Clark & Haddock, as the Iowa Supreme Court reports will show. It was no nominal partnership, either, as the spoils were divided, as the law puts such things, "share and share alike." The partnership continued until my partner's death, long afterwards in Washington, D. C., then a member of Congress.

Time has worked great changes on the prairies since I first saw them. They were gradually diminished by the encroachments of the settlers. The residents on the barrens would secure a prairie tract as near to their dwellings as practicable and cultivate it as a feeder to their home farms. This was well enough for a time. But when the pine lumber supply became more abundant through improved shipping facilities, bolder settlers went out on the prairies and made homes there. The prairie homes increased in number and multiplied in all parts of the state. The open prairies diminished in this way at a marvelous rate, till finally, in the thickly settled parts of the state the prairies, as such, entirely disappeared.

"Prairie," today, to the average citizen, is only a name. To him it means a fair farm and comfortable buildings and shady groves and orchards on the land that once was the prairie. He has no sentiment about the change and cannot understand it. He never saw the prairie, and hence never saw Iowa during its Golden Days.

The old distinguishing features of the prairie days

are passing or are gone. Indian summer, beautiful and balmy in the past, is no longer seen in Iowa. There may be some compensation for the loss of other features of our former times, but there is none in this. Indian summer was a blessing, with nothing now to take its place. We are to that extent poor indeed.

The prairie fires are gone, but that is more reasonable. Iowa has now no surplus grass to destroy. The farmers have no hay to burn. They cannot afford to waste the crop for a fall and spring conflagration. The great flocks and herds of Iowa consume the whole grass and hay crop of the state. Fat beeves are sold and shipped in train loads, fed largely on the product which was heretofore wasted annually by prairie fires.

The prairie chicken one would like to see still in the land, but that cannot be. Its day has passed. Its doom was not hastened by the hunters. Its fate was sealed by what we term the march of civilization. It was a timid bird and raised its brood in the security of the prairie. It was pitiful to see it clinging to its old home in spite of the plow and the reaper. It is not a migratory bird that could take to new fields on the destruction of its old haunts. It did what it could to exist under the new dispensation, but the struggle was too great for the handsome bird and it has well nigh faded from Iowa forever. We have no compensatory feature to record for its loss.

Of late years the English sparrow gained a foothold in the state. There is no compensation for anything in

that. It is an outcropping of dudish idiocy, in its first introduction, in the aping of everything English, "you know." This bird follows city developments and is a songless epicure that revels in fresh horse manure. It is a loathsome object compared with the beauty of the wild prairie hen.

The passing of the prairie made me sad. Every drive or trip I made told of the change. I thought of the first prairie I had ever seen, when I rode (in Jeanie Deans' words) "sae willyard a powny" over it. That was long ago and I must expect great changes. I still wondered what that prairie was like now and if it had been effected by the spirit of the times. I concluded to go and see it. I half hoped to see the wide expanse of green flowering prairie again, and see the plover, with his long legs, walking around as lord of the whole domain. I took a buggy and a driver, this time, and went out on a sunny morning, well on in June. I rather looked to bring home some sweet-williams, prairie-pinks, and wild roses for my trouble. But they were gone. We miss the wealth of flowers yielded by both prairies and barrens of "lang syne" in the springtime of the year. We can now scarcely find by hunting far and wide samples of the old time plants. They are nearly of the past. Civilization has been too much for them. They left before the march of our modern progress as if they had been sentient as well as things of beauty. We have in their stead the bluegrass and white clover of the east. These were carried here by the "movers" who traveled

with the "Prairie Schooner" as it was called. The name was applied to a certain class of white, canvas-covered wagons with feed trough swung at the end. They carried their own hay, which often contained blue-grass and white clover and in feeding the seed was scattered around their camping places. A start of this kind was enough for a neighborhood. When I first saw Iowa I saw no blue-grass nor white clover. They eventually became thick enough and many years afterwards I sent lots of this seed, raised on my own land, to farmers on western prairies to sow on well pastured tracts. These pasturage plants are some compensation for the loss of the bright spontaneous flowers of long ago.

I went through Scott township on my way out and reached the south road leading to the scene of "lang syne." As I began to catch a view of the location, I thought there must be some mistake. I could not exactly locate the site I had formerly ridden over. Even if the prairie was pretty well settled, I assumed that there would be open tracts still with some of the former glory about it. I was satisfied that the settlers there would have small frame houses and shiplap barns, and a place for hogs under the corn cribs. I expected to find a few small logs or tree tops in the front yard near the door with an ax sticking in a chunk of wood there, just as it was left after cutting the morning stove wood.

When I got well in sight of that prairie I was on an elevation and the scene before me was astonishing.

It was picturesque and pleasing. It was covered as far as the eye could reach with groves of timber. The trees were large and of numerous varieties. Large, comfortable barns and dwelling houses nestled among these groves. There has been some enchantment at work. I would drive over the scene and investigate. I drove well out on what had been the prairie. Good roads and bridges instead of mere trails; no sloughs to wade or creeks to jump there. I drove to the east and back along the north toward the west and the same appearance of comfort and wealth was everywhere. All was changed from the wild, lonely grandeur of 1856 to a great cultivated garden spot with rich, comfortable homes on it. There were fruit trees and evergreens in plenty and grape-vines and small fruit in abundance, too.

On a sunny slope facing the south I found a settler with 240 acres of land. He had grand groves, sheltering him with a wealth of pines and many other varieties of evergreens, for both protection and ornament. His lawns, gardens and yard must have contained at least five acres. The "wind breaks," as he called those fine groves, contained twice as much. I found this old settler and made friends with him and was invited in and shown around. His girls gave us a lunch and fine rich strawberries, of which his gardens contained bushels. We had hot coffee prepared on a gas stove. I was told that it was gasoline vapor gas. These dainty little maidens said it was "very nice" and that the plant furnished gas for the whole house as well as for the cooking stove. We went out to see his cornfields

in which his boys were cultivating the corn. These young men were riding as comfortably as in a buggy. Each had two fat horses and a "riding plow." I asked the young fellows if they went to see the girls in that rig, as it looked like that kind of thing. They laughed and said that it would be of no use to go in that way; that the girls had to be cultivated very differently. They had a top buggy apiece, if that helped it at all. We came back by the house and found one of the girls at the piano working off "When Johnny comes marching Home again" in fine style. The other one was working a sewing machine. Their mother was not at home. She was at a P. P. Club, about a mile north. This meant Prairie Pink Club and it was devoted to the "Philosophy of Sociology." I did not know what that meant, the P. P.'s, I think did not either. But what of that? It gave great opportunities for gossip and for working up essays, from the encyclopædias, and reviewing the social economy of society from the days of the Mound-builders down to the advent of the latest Paris bonnet. What more could any mortal want? The girls had not reached that point yet. They were devoted to a very different philosophy.

This was prairie farming, was it? Cooking on gas stoves; working corn on buggy plows; living on ripe strawberries and the fat of the land. This kind of life was a picnic. This was not the kind of thing that I was used to in my agricultural days. The prairies were gone, but let

them go if this is what takes their place. Still I miss and regret the departure of their old time splendor.

I wondered what my favorite prairie at Cedar Rapids was like after all these years. There must be trees there now of great size, and the settlers enjoying their shade, in splendor and comfort. I determined to go and see it and to go at once. So we drove back through these luxurious prairie homes to Oasis. I there took the cars for Cedar Rapids. This far surpassed footing it as of yore. But we must put on style nowadays to keep pace with the stylish agriculturist of the prairies.

Late that evening we reached Cedar Rapids, crossing the river lower down than I expected, and a little south of the town. I took a street car for a hotel. That ride in an electric car struck me as a great contrast with what I had found when there first. Then I was independent and walked to a log tavern where I spent a night. Now I take a comfortable car, name a splendid hotel to the conductor and I am let off at its very door. A waiter comes out, takes my grip and shows me in. Everything is in readiness and I am waited on right royally, just as if they had been expecting me, as Samantha Allen said.

I was out early next morning and tried to find my log hotel, but it was gone, as well as every structure that I recollected. I found instead splendid blocks of fine buildings and miles of well paved streets. There seemed to be no end of business places. I took an electric car and rode out in the suburbs on the bluffs to the north

of town and found fine palatial residences everywhere. Cedar Rapids is an amazing place now. I noticed that three great through rail roads had depots right in the town. Some of these roads have their main offices and shops there, too.

I wandered up the railroad and finally reached the river and was surprised at the amount of water I saw there. There was the Cedar River dam which supplied power for manufacturing purposes. I saw that activity and energy had taken the place of the quiet repose of long ago. I walked slowly back to my hotel and concluded to visit my beautiful prairie with the western sun shining on the long grass and see it at its best. I told the landlord to order a buggy for me. It was soon announced as a "turnout." I turned out too, instructing the driver to cross the river and drive over the prairie westward. When I got on the bridge and looked for the prairie I was stunned. I saw before me one grand panorama of city buildings covering that entire area that I had traversed with so much pleasure when it was an open prairie. I drove on the streets all through that territory, but did not find a vestige of former days. The houses were in solid blocks and detached buildings, for any and all purposes incident to city life. This was settling up a prairie with a vengeance! I went back depressed with the "turnout." But what did it matter? We must look for the prairies to pass and be dedicated to new uses and purposes and the occupants be the happier and the bet-

ter for that. I returned to Iowa City, to the law office and to work again in good heart.

Time rolled on, as time will, until it has rolled into several years since my last search for the bright, flower covered prairies. The day of such enchanting scenes is past. They and their former glory are nothing now but a recollection. Still my great interest in them has not waned even in these changed conditions. They are teeming garden spots now and I like to hear from the settlers on them.

The summer of 1901 was dry and there were loud complaints of the crop failure in consequence. I wrote to a friend living on the bottom land prairie in Woodbury County, on one of the branches or tributaries of the Little Sioux River, and asked for a report of his season's crop. After a good deal of delay he answered. I quote from his letter. He says, "I am so stiff and tired after the day's work that I can hardly sleep at night. That is why I did not write sooner. * * * The trouble is I could not get 'help' enough to do the work. I will take things more comfortably now that the corn is all cribbed." "Our crop was good for this season. We have about 4000 bushels of this year's corn in crib, and about 2000 bushels of last year's corn in crib and it is now selling in our nearest shipping point at 57 cents per bushel. I have about 700 bushels of wheat in bin worth now 62 cents per bushel. I have 40 head of cattle and 60 head of hogs and 9 head of horses, and I do not owe any man one dollar. We are all enjoying

good health. So you see we have no kick coming." That is the kind of a letter to give us a fair notion of the prairies in the fall of the past dry summer. This man's surplus stock and crop, just now, on the 10th day of December, 1901, when he wrote, was worth at least \$5000, without touching the proper outfit to run the farm. Wherever we find the prairies they are always ahead. We get "no kick" there. There is little use in fretting at the passing of these superb lands under the plow, if that is the way it works. If any of the settlers in the timber or on the barrens in the "lang syne" could have figured out that much capital ahead he would have sold out, gone to town and taken to banking, issued wild-cat money galore and when the game was up gone back to the farm again.

Iowa as a state was always great. It is greater now, since its prairies are broken up and settled, than ever before. The comparative importance of a state is usually estimated by its resources and population and the wealth and the intelligence and comfort of its people. Gauged in this way, Iowa is pre-eminently the chief of states. Its population is nearly two and one-half millions today which makes it a power in the union. It was not over one-fifth of what it now is when I first saw it. We now have over 8500 miles of railroads in the state. When I came, there were 55 miles only and part of that sunk in the mud out of sight. The fight in political lines just now is how to make the most out of these roads by taxation. There was no trouble of that sort when I first saw Iowa.

The anxiety then was to get what road they had to the surface again.

The settlers who selected this state in which to make their homes were great as a people and carried that element into every branch and function of the state. The course of such a people in such a country will ever be onward and will know no check for ages yet to come.

Although Iowa is a beautiful state today it was more beautiful in the early days. The green rolling prairies were its glory. The wild blossoming bushes on their borders made them enchanting in the gay springtime of the year. All this had to give place to the wants and necessities of the settlers as the state was developed. In fancy we wander back to the prairies and the early golden days of the state and cherish their memory. It may be called sentiment, but that is all that is left of those times now, and the recollection is dear to me.

I hold that whoever has not seen the prairies has not seen the grandeur and beauty of Iowa. The contemplation of greater wealth in buildings and farm products than the pioneers saw is a poor compensation for missing the early charms of the country.

We rejoice that no distinction can be made as to the patriotism or loyalty of the great family of Iowa citizens, and that all can join in heartfelt admiration of the state and hurrah for Iowa.

Meditatively,

WM. J. HADDOCK.

Iowa City, Iowa,

December 25, 1901.





